

PATENT

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE

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INVENTION: Storage Apparatus for Catamenial Related Products
INVENTOR: L. Marie Krey

FIELD OF THE INVENTION

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The present invention relates to a storage apparatus for catamenial related products, and, more particularly, to a reversibly sealable container having compartments for the storage of multiple items, including tampons, sanitary wipes, and pharmaceuticals, in an orderly, safe, clean, and convenient manner.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION AND PRIOR ART

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During menses, women typically carry many items with them for sanitary and health purposes. These items can include tampons for protection, feminine wipes for sanitary purposes, and pharmaceuticals for the relief of catamenial related maladies. These items are often placed into a purse or pocket where they can easily become damaged and rendered unusable, or misplaced. Many women like to carry catamenial related items perennially but cannot or do not do so because of the risk of damage to the items. Not infrequently, therefore, women will not take the products with them because there is no convenient or safe way to store them. This can lead to embarrassment if the situation arises that the products are needed.

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When a women needs to use the products, she needs to alternatively carry her purse with her to a restroom facility or take the needed items from her purse

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and carry them to a restroom. Both of these situations can be inconvenient or a cause of embarrassment.

Over the years, several attempts at providing a solution to the problems of carrying required catamenial products have been proposed. Each of the prior art, while advancing the field, has shortcomings. For example, U.S. patent number 4,286,639 to Murphy discloses and teaches a wallet for carrying a sanitary napkin or a tampon. This prior art consists of a soft sided apparatus that will not prevent the crushing of a tampon held within it. It also does not provide for the storage of other necessary items such as wipes and pharmaceuticals.

Another example is seen in related U.S. design patents, D427,424 and D432,784, both to Conway. These design patents each claim an elongated, oval apparatus having closed ends. Being design patents, there cannot, of course, be a claimed function, but it is presumed that the ornamental design contemplates a solid, protective case.

Yet another example is seen in U.S. patent number 5,730,294 to Blosser which discloses a designer tampon case. The case has two concave storage compartments for the storage of tampons. In an alternate embodiment, the apparatus contains a third concave storage compartment for storing items such as lipstick, coins, or keys. While this apparatus is a step forward for the art field, it is not without shortcomings. First, it is a rigid apparatus but requires two or more pieces as essential to make up its configuration: an exterior layer and an internal

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layer. A third covering layer is also included. This multiple layer design makes the apparatus unnecessarily costly to produce. Second, the apparatus teaches and claims concave channels in which tampons are stored separated from one another. This feature limits the apparatus in terms of the ability to store tampons and does not permit a user the flexibility to store other items such as panty liners. The concave channels further limit the ability to store other items to cylindrical items and does not contemplate storing non-cylindrical items such as sanitary wipes or pharmaceuticals. Third, the covering taught by the invention can create an environment for bacteria or virus growth. Finally, this patent does not teach the ability to store other catamenial related items.

There is need, therefore, for an apparatus that is a single piece, inexpensive to manufacture, and provides the ability to store tampons and other necessary items for menses in a convenient, rigid, safe, clean, and organized manner.

OBJECTS AND ADVANTAGES OF THE INVENTION

It is an object of the invention to provide a storage container for multiple catamenial related items, such as tampons, panty liners, sanitary wipes, and pharmaceuticals.

It is a further object of the invention to provide a safe, rigid, convenient, and organized manner in which to store the items.

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It is yet another object of the invention to provide such a storage container that provides a clean environment for the storage of necessary items.

It is yet another object of the invention to provide such a storage container that can be made economically in a single piece.

5 It is yet another object of the invention to provide a storage apparatus to provide an apparatus that enables a user to customize its look.

An advantage of the above objects of the invention is that catamenially necessary items will be conveniently and safely available to a user.

A further advantage of the invention is that a user will be able to carry
10 multiple catamenial items in a single apparatus.

Yet another advantage of the invention is that the user will have a simple, easy to use apparatus that is made of a single material that promotes a clean environment.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION

15 The above objects and advantages are provided for in a storage apparatus for catamenial related items. According to the invention, a container base having a back wall, a generally circular side wall, and a bottom creates an interior space for storage. The interior space of the container base is further divided into three storage compartments. The first storage compartment is used, for example, for
20 the storage of at least one tampon, the second storage compartment used for

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storing sanitary wipes, and the third storage compartment used for storing pharmaceuticals.

The apparatus further includes a lid for covering the interior space of the container base. The lid is preferably hingedly attached to the back wall of the container base. The lid is disposed to be reversibly closed over the interior space to seal the apparatus. The lid further includes a latch to reversibly lock the apparatus in a closed position.

In an alternate embodiment of the apparatus, the lid is not hingedly attached to the container base but is, instead, a separate lid sized to fit the container base and reversibly seal the apparatus closed.

In another embodiment of the invention the apparatus is of a generally square or rectangular shape with a hingedly affixed or a separate lid.

There has been outlined, rather broadly, the more important features of the invention in order that the detailed description thereof that follows may be better understood, and in order that the present contribution to the art may be better appreciated. There are, of course, additional features of the invention that will be described hereinafter and that will form the subject matter of the invention.

As such, those skilled in the art will appreciate that the conception, upon which this disclosure is based, may readily be utilized as a basis for the designing of other structures, methods and systems for carrying out the several purposes of the present invention. It is important, therefore, that the claims be regarded as

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including such equivalent constructions insofar as they do not depart from the spirit and scope of the present invention.

Further, the purpose of the abstract is to enable the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office and the public generally, and especially the scientists, engineers
5 and practitioners in the art who are not familiar with patent or legal terms or phraseology, to determine quickly from a cursory inspection the nature and essence of the technical disclosure of the application. The abstract is neither intended to define the invention of the application, which is measured by the claims, nor is it intended to be limiting as to the scope of the present invention in
10 any way.

These together with other objects of the present invention, along with the various features of novelty which characterize the present invention, are pointed out with particularity in the claims annexed to and forming a part of this disclosure. For a better understanding of the present invention, its operating
15 advantages and the specific objects attained by its uses, reference should be had to the accompanying drawings and descriptive matter in which there is illustrated a preferred embodiment of the present invention.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

Figure one illustrates a side perspective view of the inventive apparatus
20 with the lid hingedly affixed and in an open position.

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Figure two illustrates a side cross sectional view of the inventive apparatus with the lid hingedly affixed and in an open position.

Figure three illustrates a top view of the inventive apparatus with the lid hingedly affixed and in an open position with representative items stored within
5 the container base.

Figure four illustrates a side cross sectional view of the inventive apparatus with the lid hingedly affixed and in an open position with representative items stored within the container base.

Figure five illustrates a side cross sectional view of the inventive
10 apparatus with the lid rotating about a hinge to a cover position.

Figure six illustrates a cross sectional view of the inventive apparatus with the lid being a separate feature from the container base, the lid being disposed above the container base in position to reversibly seal the apparatus.

Figure seven illustrates a side perspective view of a representative
15 embodiment of the inventive apparatus in a generally rectangular configuration with the lid hingedly affixed and in an open position.

Figure eight illustrates a side perspective view of a representative embodiment of the inventive apparatus in a generally rectangular configuration with the lid being a separate feature from the container base.

Figure nine illustrates an example of the inventive apparatus with stickers
20 applied to it.

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Figure ten illustrates a prepackaged sanitary wipe designed to fit in the second compartment or the third compartment of the container base.

Figure eleven illustrates a sanitary wipe separated from the packaging and in an open position.

5 DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION

Before explaining the preferred embodiment of the present invention in detail, it is to be understood that the present invention is not limited in its application to the details of construction and to the arrangements of the components set forth in the following description or illustrated in the drawings.

10 The present invention is capable of other embodiments and of being practiced and carried out in various ways. Also, it is to be understood that the phraseology and terminology employed herein are for the purpose of description and should not be regarded as limiting.

Figure 1 depicts a side perspective view of catamenial item storage apparatus ("apparatus") 20. The apparatus comprises an apparatus base 22 having an interior space A defined by a back wall 24, an outer wall 26, and a bottom 28. Apparatus 20 further comprises a lid 30 hingedly affixed to apparatus base 22 by hinge 32. Space A is further divided into multiple compartments by first divider member 34 and second divider member 36. First divider member 34 extends a length L1 (see Figure 3) across a selected portion of Space A, ending adjacent to fixed locations about outer wall 26, creating first compartment 38. Second

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divider member 36 extends a length L2 (see Figure 3) that is generally perpendicular from a selected point on first divider member 34 to a selected point on outer wall 26, further dividing space A into a second compartment 40 and a third compartment 42. It is important to understand that first divider member and
5 second divider member do not have to extend and come in contact with outer wall (first divider member) or first divider member and outer wall (second divider member). It is enough that they extend sufficient length so as to compartmentalize space A.

Further lid 30 can also include reciprocal divider members, denoted as
10 34' (corresponding to first divider member 34) and 36' (corresponding to second divider member 36), thereby creating reciprocal first compartment 38', reciprocal second compartment 40', and reciprocal third compartment 42'

Apparatus 20 can be made of any material. The inventor has found that plastic appears to work best when balancing durability and cost of manufacture.
15 The material should preferably be rigid so as to provide protection to the items stored in the apparatus. Another feature of apparatus 20 is that it can serve as a surface for the placement of ornamentation 50 (see Figure nine). For a non-limiting example, lid 30 has an exterior surface 58 onto which ornamentation in the form of stickers can be adhered.

20 Apparatus 20 further includes means for reversibly securing the lid in a closed position adjacent to the apparatus base 22. The means for reversibly

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securing can be any variety. Figures two and five depict a non-limiting example of a latch having a lid latch portion 44 that interacts with container base portion 46.

As depicted in figure six, in an alternate embodiment lid 30 is a separate
5 piece from container base 22. In this embodiment, lid 30 is preferably sized to fit in a compression fashion on container base 22 via edge 48.

Figure seven illustrates yet another embodiment of the invention in which the container base is of a rectangular or square configuration with a lid of a like-shaped configuration. In this configuration, the lid 30 can be hingedly affixed to
10 container base 22 or be a separate piece fitting the apparatus base 22 (not shown) as in the preferred embodiment as illustrated in figure six.

One of the main features of the inventive apparatus is that it enables a user to carry multiple catamenial related items in a safe, clean, and orderly manner. One item that many women find particularly helpful is a sanitary wipe 52. The
15 wipe can be of any variety acceptable to the user but the inventor preferably contemplates a sanitary wipe sized and packaged to fit in any of the compartments 38, 40, or 42 of the apparatus base 22. The inventor has developed a sanitary wipe 52 (Figure eleven) that is individually packaged and sized to fit within second compartment 40 or third compartment 42. The sanitary wipe 52 is housed
20 in a sealed package 54 (Figure ten) having a first package length L3 and a second package length L4. Length L3 and length L4 are preferably 3 cm with a range of

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2.5 cm to 4 cm being acceptable. The inventor has found that this range for the package is ideally suited for use with the apparatus while at the same time enables the package to contain a sanitary wipe of sufficient size to be of value yet not so large as to limit the number of sanitary wipes that can be transported at any given
5 time. As for the sanitary wipe 52, the inventor has found that a 10 cm x 10 cm size is ideal; however the wipe can range in size from 4 cm x 4 cm to 12 cm x 12 cm and still fit the criteria of the package 54.

It is to be understood, however, that even though numerous characteristics and advantages of the preferred and alternative embodiments have been set forth
10 in the foregoing description, together with details of the structure and function of the embodiments, the disclosure is illustrative only, and changes may be made in detail, especially in matters of shape, size and arrangement of parts within the principles of the invention to the full extent indicated by the broad general meaning of the terms in which the appended claims are expressed.